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# Maine Fire Marshal News, July 2007

Maine Office of State Fire Marshal

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PREVENTION \* LAW ENFORCEMENT \* RESEARCH

# Maine Fire Marshal News

Maine State Fire Marshal's Office • Fire Research  
Maine Department of Public Safety  
Mainefiremarshal.com

July 2007

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## WELCOME!

Welcome to another edition of the Maine Fire Marshal News. As always we appreciate your taking time to read the newsletter and forwarding it on to others. With each edition we receive e-mails from individuals requesting that they be included on the list. Surprisingly, many of these new readers are not from the fire service at all! Some are teachers, physicians, builders, and "regular" citizens interested in the fire service in Maine. Again, we encourage all readers to contribute an article in a future edition.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE MARSHAL

Summer is upon us and though this newsletter will reach you after the 4th of July, it is still worth mentioning fireworks, the real harm they do, and those who are unfortunately most often hurt by fireworks: children.

Recently I learned that nationally fireworks caused an estimated 1,500 structural fires and an additional 600 fires in cars during 2004. These fires also resulted in a number of civilian injuries and \$21 million in property damage.

In terms of injuries, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 10,800 people for fireworks related injuries in 2005. In that same year, the Centers for Disease Control reported four fatalities resulting from fireworks related injuries (Greene & Joholske, 2006). Nearly 50% of these injuries were to the extremities and 44% were to the head. As is so often the case in fire fatalities and injuries most of those who were injured were males. Most disturbing is the fact that nearly half of the people injured by fire works were under the age of 15. The risk of injury from fireworks was approximately three times as high for children 10 – 14 in contrast to the population as a whole.

Sparklers, legal in Maine, were third among the type of fireworks causing most injuries. This is not surprising when you consider the fact that sparklers burn at temperatures that may exceed 1200°F. It is worth noting that only 2% of injuries occurred as a result of a public display of fireworks. The kind of show in which professionals are licensed and must qualify by taking an exam before conducting such an exhibit in Maine.

The slogan regarding "safe and sane" fireworks is an advertising trick designed to diminish an individual's fear of something going wrong with fireworks. The sad fact is, however, that things do go wrong and they go wrong fast. Unfortunately, the damage inflicted doesn't go away as fast. Statistically, the more people play with fireworks, as opposed to letting professionals handle them, the greater the odds

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are that someone will be hurt. Only five states have banned all fireworks. Be mindful that, except for sparklers and morning glories, it is illegal to possess, store or transport fireworks in Maine. Anyone caught violating the laws will face fines. For more information on what's legal and what's not in Maine feel free to contact our office. In the end analysis it only makes sense to leave fireworks to trained professionals.

We hope you have a great summer and that you and your family enjoys Maine's great outdoors this summer. Remember, the best things in life are free as well as safe.

Sincerely,  
John C. Dean  
Fire Marshal

## MOBILE HOME FIRES

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

Between 2004 and 2006, there were approximately 129 fires in mobile homes and 11% of these fires resulted in a death. That percentage supports the notion that fires in these structures are more lethal than fires in other structures.

Maine ranks between 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> nationally in the percentage of housing units that are mobile homes (Census, 2000, 2005 DP4). According to the U.S. Census, of Maine's 518,200 occupied housing units, 55,684 are mobile homes,

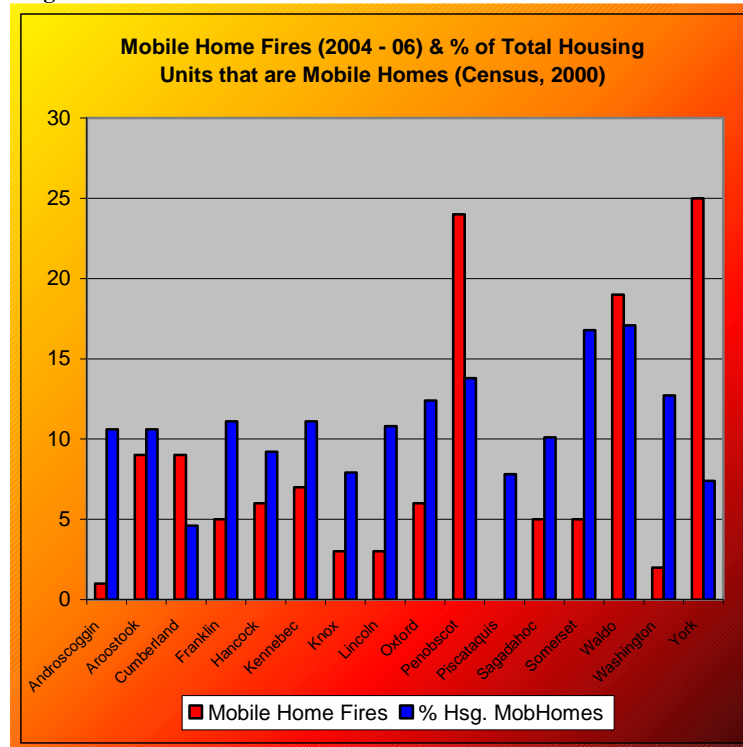
*"...11% of these [mobile home fires] resulted in a death. That percentage supports the notion that fires in these structures are more lethal than fires in other structures."*

or, roughly 10%. Figure 1 (above right), drawn from the Census, breaks this count down further

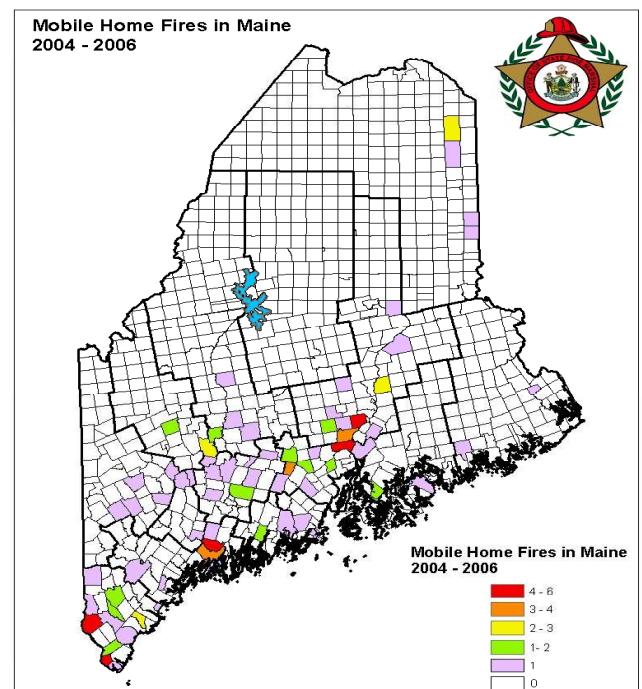
and then gives you the percentage of mobile homes in each county and the count of mobile home fires reported through MEFIRS for each county. When you look at the percentage of mobile homes in a given county and compare that to the number of mobile home fires being reported in a given county it raises some

questions as to whether all these incident types are actually being reported.

Figure 1

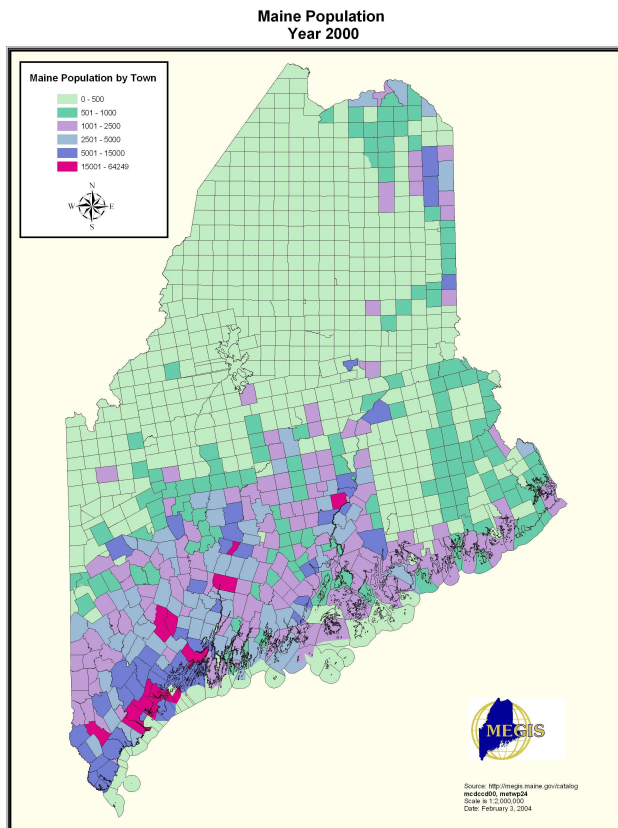


It would appear that York and Penobscot Fire Departments are doing an outstanding job reporting these incidents, or are experiencing a more severe problem than other counties. Take a look at the GIS map below (MEFIRS 04-06).



The GIS map based on MEFIRS data shows that the towns of Lebanon, Eliot, and Arundel reported a relatively high frequency of mobile home fires in York County with Bangor and Hampden experiencing similar counts in Penobscot.

Now look at the map below created by MEGIS (below) using a similar shading scheme to identify the population count. You'll notice the bulk of departments reporting mobile home fires are within the area heavily shaded in the population map below.



Obviously to really determine where or who is experiencing a severe problem in terms of mobile home fires, or a potential problem, would require looking at the town data and examining the distribution of structures at that level.

For the time being however, take a look at what's being reported, and look at the maps and ask yourself if this represents what is happening in Maine with mobile home fires. If you believe

the data does not represent an accurate picture of the frequency or distribution of these events in Maine, please call our office.

## **MAINE'S CHILD FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION CAMPAIGN**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

There are multiple costs associated with fires in Maine. For many reasons addressing child fire safety and prevention promises not only to reduce the immediate social and economic costs of fire but also begin a process of building a culture of fire safety in Maine.

The data from Maine's Uniform Crime Reporting System shows that an average of 59% of individuals arrested for arson since 1995 have been 17 years old or younger. In addition, since 2004 Maine Fire Departments have reported responding to approximately 1,000 incidents in which children were involved in the ignition of a fire. In two instances children have been killed. The costs associated with response, injury, death, combined with property losses are considerable.

To address these concerns, Maine's Fire Marshal has done a story with the Maine's Public Broadcasting Network to discuss children and cigarette lighters that look like toys. We are



also posting information on our web in reference to these lighters (see pictures left and following page). We will also be working to develop a media packet and a letter addressed to tobacco retailers' requesting that they not sell these lighters. The Fire Marshal, Dr. Dora Mills of Maine's CDC, and our own Commissioner, Anne Jordan will sign the letter.

It is easy to see why a child might mistake these for a toy?!



Campaigns focused on this particular issue have already begun in Oregon and elsewhere. In fact, the toy lighter pictures you see here were provided to us from the Oregon Fire Marshal's Office.



In addition to the lighter issue, we'll be addressing the larger picture of child fire safety and prevention with some TV and radio PSAs directed toward parents and caregivers. The Fire Marshal's Office will also have officers

trained on presenting the *Hazard House*® model home to children in Maine schools where the local fire department, due to a lack of resources, may not be able to provide such programming. The model "Hazard House" highlights the potential fire hazards in every home and the steps that can be taken to prevent fires. The model house also allows the presenter to demonstrate the physical characteristics of a fire spreading through a house, escape strategies, and why mitigation mechanisms such as a smoke alarm are so critical to saving lives in such an emergency.

The State Fire Marshal's staff believes that educating Maine's children about fire safety and prevention at a young age will help reduce the number of incidents we see presently and that knowledge will have long term benefits for all Maine citizens.

## **NFPA FIRE PREVENTION WEEK** **2007 THEME ANNOUNCED:** **PRACTICE YOUR ESCAPE PLAN**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

As you all know, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) sponsors a fire

prevention week. The theme for Fire Prevention Week 2007 focuses on how to plan and practice escape from your home in case of fire.

The NFPA estimates that only 23% of households nationwide have actually developed and practiced a home fire escape plan. As I continue to research the SFMO fire fatality files I often find myself wondering if the victim had, prior to the fire, considered what route they would take to exit the home and if they were staying low to avoid inhaling disabling smoke. Though the files can not tell me with complete certainty what the victims were doing or what the rate of fire spread or extent of the fire was at the time an apparent attempt to escape was made, I do believe that some could have survived had they planned ahead.

The NFPA recommends the following tips with regard to fire escape planning:

- Draw a simple floor plan of your home showing all exits, including windows in your home
- Discuss the plan focusing on the best ways out of each room and mark those exits in your plan
- Make sure all exits are clear and if you have security bars, make sure they have quick-release devices on the inside
- Decide where everyone is to gather outside the home after they've escaped
- Be sure everyone knows the emergency number for the local fire department, and
- Make sure everyone knows the sound of the smoke alarm and when it sounds to get out and stay out.



For more information on this years NFPA Fire Prevention Week theme and materials you can obtain to get this critical message out, go to [www.firepreventionweek.org](http://www.firepreventionweek.org) on the web.

## **INTERNATIONAL CODE COUNCIL FAILS TO MODIFY CODE TO REQUIRE SPRINKLERS IN SINGLE FAMILY HOMES**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

Despite receiving the support of “well over half of the voting members...” a proposal to modify the International Residential Code in favor of fire sprinklers in single-family homes failed due a procedural requirement for a supermajority vote.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> the ICC held a public hearing on the proposal in Rochester, NY. Though the outcome was not what many hoped, the support was encouraging and Ronny J. Coleman, former California State Fire Marshal stated, “It’s now clear to me that the question is no longer if we’ll have a national requirement for residential sprinklers, but when, and I think it will happen soon.”

The 2006 NFPA edition of the *Life Safety Code* already contains a requirement for

*“It’s now clear to me that the question is no longer if we’ll have a national requirement for residential sprinklers, but when, and I think it will happen soon.”*

sprinklers in new one and two family dwellings. In Maine, and other states as well, the two codes often compete.

Given the action taken by the NFPA and how close the ICC came to adopting a similar measure, it does appear as if momentum toward sprinklers in these residential dwellings will continue to build.

For more information on this issue access the IRC Fire Sprinkler Coalition at [www.IRCFireSprinkler.org](http://www.IRCFireSprinkler.org).



## **SFMO SENIOR INVESTIGATOR STEWART JACOBS WINS IAAI PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

Stewart Jacobs, veteran fire investigator from the Northern Division was awarded second place in the Accidental Fire category at the 2007 IAAI Annual Training Conference in Victoria, British Columbia.

The contest, open to all IAAI members, requires photos from actual investigations be submitted along with an explanation of what took place, when, where, and how.

Below are two photos taken from an investigation Stewart conducted that demonstrate how “pictures tell a story.” Congratulations Stewart!





# **THE HISTORY OF “CHANGE YOUR CLOCK-CHANGE YOUR BATTERY”**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

Recently an economist who was reviewing some research I'd done on fire fatality in Maine asked me when the “Change Your Clock-Change Your Battery” slogan was introduced by the fire service in reference to smoke alarm battery replacement. He suggested that there could be a correlation between such easy-to-remember fire safety slogans and reductions in fire death and injury.

Having been employed in market research before I found the concept interesting and recalled that many experts in the marketing business do view simple-easy-to remember slogans as being effective in selling products. Though I can't say for sure when in Maine this particular slogan really took hold, I did find something about the origin of the campaign nationally.

In the Mid 1980's, Energizer (batteries) recognized a disturbing trend (one not unknown to the fire service): home fire deaths and injuries were increasing despite widespread use of smoke detectors. Research showed non-working smoke alarms were often responsible. Representatives of

Energizer formed a coalition with the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and fire departments nationwide.

They realized smoke alarm neglect was not being addressed on a large scale and that a massive public education program was needed. Together they proposed the “Change your clock – Change your battery” public education campaign.

The idea was first tested in St. Louis and Atlanta in 1987. Today it is a national campaign

involving more than 5,400 fire departments and is the most widely used fire safety public education program in the nation.

## **PICTURES FROM BEAN'S FIRE SAFETY SCHOOL**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

In the last edition of this newsletter I wrote an article about Dan Bean, a fire educator from the Old Town Fire Department. At that time however, I was unable to obtain any photos of Dan doing his work. At last I have some and wanted to share them with you. By the way Dan will be helping the SFMO in developing the use of the *Hazard House*® we obtained through a grant from the Department of Homeland Security, United States Fire Administration.





## **NFPA TRAINING UNDERWAY AT FLORIAN HALL**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

As I write this newsletter the SFMO is hosting (perhaps the largest) NFPA training seminar ever. The participants come from the fire service, code enforcement community, engineers, architects, and other interested parties in Maine and Canada.

The codes being addressed in this seminar series include the *101 Life Safety Code* and the *72 National Fire Alarm Code*. In addition to these two critical codes, standards on fire sprinklers, building construction, and fire doors will also be covered.

Ron Coté, considered by some to be the “father” of the *Life Safety Code* will be presenting. Ron is a Principal Life Safety Engineer with the National Fire Protection Association Building Construction and Life Safety Division, Quincy, Massachusetts, USA. He joined the NFPA staff in 1981; serves as staff liaison and secretary to many of the Committees on the Life Safety Code® and Committees on the Building Construction and Safety Code®; and is co-editor of the Life Safety Code Handbook.

Ron will be joined by Jim Lake, a Senior Fire Protection Specialist who is responsible for working with the NFPA Technical Committee on Automatic Sprinklers, responsible for writing NFPA 13, 13D and 13R. Rounding out the presenters is Lee Richardson, Sr. Electrical Engineer who is responsible for NFPA 72, *National Fire Alarm Code*, and NFPA 720, *Standard for the Installation of Carbon Monoxide Warning Equipment in Dwelling Units*.

We're honored and fortunate to have these individuals with us this week. It is our hope that all in attendance will gain from these seminars and proactively increase the use and

impact these codes can have in preventing fire in their respected communities.

## **WHAT IS YOUR FIRE DEPARTMENT DOING FOR FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY PROGRAMMING?**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

The Fire Marshal's Office would like to gain a better understanding of what Maine Fire Departments are doing in the area of fire prevention education and awareness programming around the state. Knowing what is going on in various areas will help us target our efforts better and avoid duplicating services.

If your department is proactively conducting fire prevention and safety programs, or, doing them upon request e-mail me at [Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov](mailto:Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov) I'll be looking for the following information:

1. Do you plan and conduct fire prevention programs each year?
2. Do you provide such programs upon request only?
3. Do you have staff specifically trained to provide such programs and if so, what training/certification have they received?
4. Do you enforce fire codes?
5. Do you provide any services in the way of juvenile fire setting intervention?

I would also appreciate your fire department's name, location (town and county), and contact information (phone/e-mail). Any additional information you wish to provide about the program your offering as well as the source of funding, i.e. grants, general budget, other sources, would also be greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in learning more about this project or have any ideas about conducting such a survey/inventory don't hesitate to contact our office. Thank you.



## UPCOMING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



**19<sup>th</sup> Annual Pine Tree Burn Foundation Fire and  
Life Safety Conference  
“Safe At Home – 2007”  
October 18 – 20, 2007  
Atlantic Oaks Resort  
Bar Harbor, Maine  
For more information contact: Tom Malcolm,  
(207) 723-4193 or by e-mail at  
[301tm@verizon.net](mailto:301tm@verizon.net)**

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**Southern Maine Community College  
Maine Fire Training and Education  
Fire Science Program**

This fall MFTE will offer the 45-hour FT-218 **Fire and Life Safety Educator** course (description below) on Thursday afternoons from 1:30PM – 3:45PM @ SMCC main campus. Steve Willis Instructing. For registration info, log on to [www.smccme.edu](http://www.smccme.edu)

This course is designed to meet the requirements of the NFPA 1035, the professional qualification standards for Public Fire and Safety Educator I and II. The course combines student activities, instructor presentations and community-based projects to develop skills and knowledge in the field. The course will provide students with the knowledge to design a public fire and life safety program, to organize a budget to meet the needs of the program, and to present a fire safety or life safety education presentation.

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To submit articles for publication contact the Fire Marshal's Office at (207) 626-3870 and ask to speak with the editors. You may also e-mail an article or comment to [Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov](mailto:Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov)

All articles are subject to an editorial staff review prior to inclusion. For a copy of submission requirements contact the editorial staff.

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